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Report-

In-House Meeting

**With Chinese Delegation from the
Institute of International and Strategic
Studies, Peking University**
September 26, 2016



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Pictures from the Meeting



A six-member delegation led by Professor Wang Jisi, President, Institute of International and Strategic Studies (IISS), Peking University visited the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on September 26, 2016. Other members of the delegation included: Mr. Gui Yongtao, Assistant to the President IISS,; Ms. Qian Xuemei, Associate Professor, Institute of International Relations, Peking University; Ms. Li Qingyan, Research Assistant, IISS; Mr. Wang Zhu, Deputy Director, Asia Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Tang Xin, Second Secretary, Asia Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Zhou Lijian, DCM, Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China in Islamabad and Mr. Meijing, Second Secretary at the Embassy.

Acting Director General, Mr. Najam Rafique, welcomed the delegation and said that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is not just of importance to Pakistan, but to China as well. The corridor, he said is also becoming a concern to some countries, particularly the United States and its allies, particularly India, and recently Afghanistan. The latter has raised concerns and threatening to deny access to Pakistan to the Central Asian gas pipelines. Also, at the behest of India, they have also recently raised the border issue. Moreover, India, in order to sabotage CPEC has raised the issue of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), which is the land corridor between Pakistan and China, as being part of Kashmir and is issuing new maps that show the whole GB region as a part of the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Two presentations were made on the occasion. The first was on the prospects of CPEC by Ms. Ume Farwa, Research Associate. She showcased how the CPEC as the flagship project of China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative will set an example of:

- A model of South-South Cooperation
- A model of win-win inclusive economic cooperation
- A Model of "Shared Destiny" Based on Shared Responsibility
- An emerging model of integration of multiple regions
- An impetus for building other economic corridors
- A model of constructing a new civilisational zone

She said that various projects under CPEC include the Karot Hydropower Project invested by the IFC of the World Bank and the Silk Fund. Some of the energy projects are directly invested by Commercial Bank of China and Import-Export Bank of China (EXIM Bank). All the energy projects are based on IPP mode. The Frontier Works Organization (FWO) is undertaking construction of 870 km of the roads in Balochistan as part of the western route of the CPEC to operationalise the Gwadar Deep Sea Port by enhancing its connectivity. With regard to the CPEC eastern route, the FWO is currently undertaking many projects which include the repair and modernisation of the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway (M-2), the Pak-China Dedicated Freight Corridor, the Oil City and White Oil Pipeline and various other energy and water sector projects. Moreover the CPEC is a model of exchange of culture of peaceful co-existence (art, religion, philosophy, language), science, technology and architecture. Keeping in view intolerance and xenophobia in contemporary societies, such initiatives may act as a harbinger of promotion of peace and tolerance to connect people. Hence, the prospects of CPEC are very promising and bright.

The next presentation by Ms. Amina Khan, Research Fellow was on Pakistan-Afghan Relations. She stated that Pakistan- Afghanistan relations have been strained with the exception of a few brief moments of stability. Pakistan and Afghanistan had witnessed a marked improvement in relations, particularly after the government of national unity came into power in November 2014. Improving ties with Pakistan was a major priority of President Ghani, and who had said that “partnership with Pakistan is an important pillar of Afghanistan’s foreign policy,” and “Pakistan's cooperation was key to the peace process”. However, she said, that these gains have been limited and short-lived. Certain elements within Afghanistan continue to mistrust Pakistan, particularly the Afghan intelligence agency. Time and again, Afghan authorities have resorted to accusing Pakistan for all the ills in the country, including the surge in violence, abetting the Taliban and being an obstacle to the peace process. Therefore, the current spate of accusations levelled against Pakistan is not a new phenomenon nor is this unexpected. For quite some time, domestic pressure has been building on President Ghani due to his overtures towards Pakistan. In fact, the sentiment in Kabul has been so hostile that it led to the resignation of Rahmatullah Nabil as director of the NDS due to differences with President Ghani over his decision to attend the ministerial conference in Pakistan in 2015, as well as Pakistan’s role in the reconciliation process. Ms. Khan emphasised that Pakistan’s role in the peace process is vital. Hence, it would be prudent for the Afghan leadership to continue peace talks, as well as ease tensions with Pakistan instead of kowtowing to divisive elements opposed to both. Exerting pressure on Pakistan will not deliver peace in Afghanistan. On the contrary, it will only jeopardise the gains made so far, as well as between Pakistan and Afghanistan in their strained relationship. Pakistan and Afghanistan need to move forward and engage on a host of issues, and not limit their relationship to the peace process.

During the Q&A Session, the delegation wanted to know about the Pakistani opinion on the recent agreement between India and Afghanistan. Ms Amina Khan said that the peace process in Afghanistan should be Afghan owned and Afghan led. Afghanistan is trying to push for a military relationship with India, but the Indians are being cautious. For them it may just be a tactic to incite Pakistan. But, she added that President Ghani is aware that at some point in time his government will have to turn to Pakistan if they have to achieve sustainable peace. Thus, it is not a concern for Pakistan. Mr. Najam added that given that the tenure of the Afghan national unity government is finishing by the end of this month, the Afghan government is not sure of what kind of interim Government will be set up, if at all. But the indicators are very hopeful in terms of the recent agreement they have had with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. This is a good indication that the Afghans are willing to accommodate the Taliban factions, and an indicator of the peace process moving forward.

On the question of the United States-China relations, Us opposition to CPEC and China's relations with Afghanistan, Mr Najam said that as far as an open opposition to the CPEC is concerned there have been none. In fact many Americans would love to see China take on a larger role in Afghanistan. However, there is opposition regarding the expansion and the growing military and economic strength of China, and in that sense, the Americans have been working toward ensuring that as many hurdles are created in terms of checking the advance of China in bringing about regional connectivity under its OBOR initiative. In terms of presenting a military opposition to China, the Americans have now been rebalancing military forces in Asia Pacific, although there is very limited chance of any conflict between China and the US,

particularly because the focus of US is shifting towards the Middle East and the growing terrorism in that region. This will be taking off much of the US attention from Asia Pacific, and China. Any competition that may arise between China and the US will be in the context of economic dominance.